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ABSTRACT

A review of literature dealing with psychological needs, including work by Maslow (with explanations of comfort, security, the social instinct, ego gratification, and self actualization) serves as a foundation for an examination of the problem of motivating students. Two major causes of lack of motivation, poor teaching and poor curriculum, are considered. It is pointed out that, unless the curriculum is designed in such a way that students find a purpose and relationship between their studies and real life, schools are going to continue to bore them. Symptoms of lack of motivation, in particular three stages of student "burn-out," are described. These physical and psychological manifestations of loss of motivation are described to indicate to the alert teacher that a student has erected a block to meaningful learning. Suggestions are made for ways in which teachers can develop self-motivation in students. Particular emphasis is placed on developing questioning and listening skills and the use of positive reinforcement. (JD)

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STUDENT MOTIVATION: A RECIPE FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

INTRODUCTION

The 14th Gallup Poll of the American public's attitudes toward the public schools taken in 1982, revealed the following ten major problems confronting American schools: lack of discipline, lack of proper financial support, use of drugs, poor curriculum and poor standards, difficulty getting good teachers, teachers' lack of interest, integration and busing, pupils' lack of interest, parents' lack of interest, and large overcrowded schools. (Annual Editions, 1983) The fact that the American public identified lack of interest or motivation on the part of the students as a major national school problem means that the issue deserves a close look and some understanding on the part of educational practitioners, especially classroom teachers. Unless teachers create a classroom climate that will encourage students to motivate themselves, this problem is likely to grow to uncontrolable proportions.

The term "motivation" is usually and commonly associated with big business or corporations, simply because management scientists who deal in the subject are employees or consultants of these large corporations. Although this is the case, educators, especially classroom teachers who are responsible for students' efforts, should wrestle with the dynamics of motivation. Teachers who are responsible for students' production, therefore, should make an effort to acquire a sound understanding of the implications of the concept for learners.

Dictionaries generally agree that to motivate people is to cause them to act in a certain way. In simple terms, this means that the people to be motivated should be furnished with a motive to do something. The most elementary form of motivation is exemplified by a hold-up man walking into a bank, sticking a gun in a teller's face, and saying: "Stick 'em up,

your money or your life." The robber instantly arouses a motive in the teller for doing something--preserving his life.

THE MYSTERIES OF MOTIVATION

In a classroom setting students quickly learn that "being bad" in the eyes of their teachers will result in punishment, while being good will result in reward or a treat of some kind. The teachers have instilled in their students the motive of avoiding punishment and getting rewards. In management science, the concept of reward and punishment is generally referred to as the "carrot-and-stick" approach. In this metaphor, the carrot is dangled in front the donkey's nose and the stick applied very smartly to its hindquarters. By so doing, the donkey is alternately enticed and impelled toward its master's goal or objective. In this metaphor, whether the donkey gets to enjoy the carrot or not is not clear, but one thing is clear--it has a chance to feel the stinging stick on its body.

The concept of motivation is a very complex one. Peter Drucker, who is considered the father of modern management science, published a book entitled *The End of Economic Man,* in which he says: "We know nothing about motivation. All we can do is write books about it." (Drucker, 1939)

A six million dollar question which must be discussed at this point is: "Does good motivation come from without or from within the individual?" Literature on motivation seems to indicate that high level motivation resulting in high level performance must come from within the individual. According to most of the literature on management theories, motivation is the sum total of the individual's aspirations, values, self esteem and sensibilities. This being the case, it is the individual's possession, to be withheld or given, depending on how he or she feels about the situation at hand. In his book, *Effective Managerial Leadership* (1972), published by the American Management Association, James J. Cribben says: "To elicit people's top performance, one must get them to drive themselves...." Based on

Cribben's statement, it would seem clear that the function of motivation in education is to move students to perform at the very peak of their abilities. Hence a conscientious teacher should make a concerted effort to create and maintain a psychological climate which enables students to do their level best in all their tasks.

Internal motivation of students can, however, be maintained only if the learning conditions correspond with the students' needs that are within their psyche. In his work, *Motivation and Personality* (1970), A.H. Maslow divided the range of a normal human being's needs into five broad categories which deal with comfort, security, the social instinct, ego gratification, and self actualization. A cursory look at each of the five basic needs pointed out by Maslow would be very helpful in understanding their importance to student motivation.

1. *Comfort*. Every human being needs comfort, and students are no exception in this respect. In a classroom situation the comfort can be either physical or psychological. Psychological discomfort can be caused by quite a number of things which might include the following: A teacher who ignores the presence of the above mentioned elements can only succeed in adding to the discomfort. Undue emphasis on grades can sometimes be a source of discomfort for some students. This being the case, it then becomes the teacher's responsibility to eliminate any elements of the classroom situation which might create discomfort in students.

2. *Security*. If a person is fully secure, he or she is free of fear. It is fear that creates insecurity. A threat of any kind to any student's security makes learning very difficult for students. Because of this, it is not advisable for teachers to use fear as a motivational technique in the classroom, even though fear can be a

very powerful motivational device.

A student who is frightened and insecure cannot think clearly and the end result is that he or she becomes disorganized. Worry may cause, in some cases, mental or physical complications. Students, especially those going through developmental changes, have enough fears as it is. Certain educational practices, such as overuse and misuse of test or examination results, can be a source of insecurity. Another source of insecurity is a situation in which teachers encourage fierce academic competition among students. Continually reminding students that they are good for nothing or that they are "dumb" may create a lot of insecurity in students. Lack of confidence in their work might cause students to be insecure. It is up to teachers to instill, through positive reinforcement and praise, a sense of security in their students.

3. *The Social Instinct*. The social instinct motive has to do with people's need to be accepted in social circles. People, especially youths by nature are very gregarious beings. In simple terms, people are forever trying to establish friendships. Boys and girls naturally enjoy talking to each other. A smart teacher will exploit this situation by dividing children into groups for some class activities. Here is a situation in which the teacher might encourage students to learn about the dynamics of friendship; such alliances could be the beginning of real friendships which might culminate in life partnerships. Each teacher is then expected to determine what kind of friendships should be encouraged or discouraged.

4. *Ego gratification.* Gratification is one of the basic goals each of us has in life. It is a goal that all people, in varying degrees of course, always try to achieve. People use different ways of achieving this goal. Some people play or amuse themselves to get some gratification. In young people or students this motive is closely related to the need for action, adventure, excitement, or fun. Since this is true, a creative classroom teacher can seize the opportunity to utilize this natural motive among students by using games, taking care that they are simple enough to allow unmotivated students to participate. Some teachers use games in classes such as social studies, math, economics, foreign languages, or English. Teachers who make a deliberate effort to fulfill these students' need for self gratification always find it worthwhile.

5. *Self-actualization.* In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization or self-esteem is the highest of the five needs. It involves the whole idea of a person's living up to his or her image. In a classroom situation students attain this level of motivation as a result of the teacher's praise or reward. Every student, no matter how poor, intellectually speaking, wants to feel that he or she is important and well respected by friends. Although this is a phenomenon or need found in all human beings, it seems to be most evidenced in adolescents. Adolescents would do almost anything to impress people so as to get approval from their peers, or superiors such as teachers. They want to avoid failure and succeed in order to build their self-esteem. This being the case, good teachers would always find opportunities to praise their students, especially those who are the least self-motivated. Like adults, students value recognition and acknowledgement of their good performance.

Maslow was quick to point out that the satisfaction of these needs should not be mistaken for motivation; rather, it should be considered as the

drive to obtain or sustain the satisfaction. Perhaps the biggest lesson teachers can learn from Maslow's work is that any attempt to motivate students to do their work must be tailor-made to the needs of their individual personalities. This is not easy to do. But then, no one ever said it was going to be easy!

Some industrial psychologists seem to agree that people cannot be motivated. They also feel that if employers tried to motivate their employees to become more productive, one or more of the following might happen:

1. Employees will suspect that the employer is trying to manipulate them, and will resent the employer for it.
2. The employer's efforts imply that the employees are not working up to par. The natural defense reaction would be, "We are doing the best we can."
3. The employees might think that their employers consider themsleves to be superior to the employees. This situation might set up an antagonism on the part of the employees and directed toward their employers.
4. The employees might have fear of such factors as failure, the unknown, ridicule or nonacceptance by peers.

Although the above mentioned points directly have a lot to do with employer-employee relationships, the principles discussed also apply to teacher-student relationships.

SOME CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS OF LACK OF MOTIVATION

In dealing with the concept of motivation, people always make a mistake of confusing its causes with its symptoms. This part of the article will deal with some causes and symptoms of lack of motivation. There are quite a number of causes, but only two of them will be discussed here.

One major and perhaps most important cause of lack of motivation is poor teaching. Teaching is always ineffective whenever it violates the laws

of learning or because it is poorly planned. Poor course organization which might be evidenced in lack of direction may be part of poor teaching. Sometimes the course work is too difficult or too easy to be meaningful to students. Invariably, some teachers become too ambitious and in so doing cover work too rapidly for the students' rate of comprehension. They do not give students sufficient time to digest educational materials. The mistake they would be making in this situation is that of overlooking some of the learning principles which have to do with variables such as individual differences among students, difference in cultural backgrounds, and in interests or abilities.

The other major cause of lack of motivation among students is poor curriculum. Because of the complexity of modern society, a good amount of things taught in schools today have very little bearing on students' real life needs. Some educational philosophers strongly believe that probably half of the school curriculum could be dropped from the school program tomorrow without anyone's noticing its passing (Clark and Starr, 1969). Whether this is true of not is beside the point, because it would seem to be the case that most of what goes on in school does not interest most students. Very few curricular offerings prepare students for the future. Somehow school curricula have drifted away from what John Dewey saw as one of the broad aims of the American system of education - active learning, shared experience, real problems, and problem solving (Charles et al, 1978). For a lot of students, some studies are busy work, only intended to occupy them. Unless the curriculum is designed in such a way that students find a purpose and relationship between their studies and real life, schools are going to continue to bore students.

According to some educational psychologists (Pines and Maslach, 1980) lack of motivation among students might be evidenced in what they call student "burn-out". This theoretical approach to identifying symptoms of lack of motivation is defined in terms of "burnout-degrees" as briefly discussed below.

First Degree Burn. This stage in students' lack of motivation is very mild. One of the most obvious symptoms among students is short-lived bouts of irritability. Fatigue or boredom are very common among those students who lack motivation. Some students worry a lot, and consequently get frustrated by school work or activities in general.

Second Degree Burn. Students who are at this stage of lack of motivation have more serious symptoms. These students develop very negative attitudes toward their school work. They feel rather negative and act negatively toward life in general. They do not like what they have become, and they begin to move into shells. They become extremely defensive. They put very little effort into their school work. Most of them do not want to be "hassled" by anybody, especially their teachers.

Third Degree Burn. This final stage is very severe indeed. Victims of this kind of burnout have rather severe physical ailments which might include ulcers, chronic back pain or migraine headaches. Psychologically speaking, the students develop very severe interpersonal discord with their peers, teachers, administrators, and families. These students are totally disgusted with school and they become sour on themselves, humanity or the whole world.

These causes and symptoms of lack of motivation are some of the blocks to meaningful learning among students. If the teachers are to do their job - helping students to learn meaningfully - these blocks would have to be removed. Good teachers will always find ways to teach their students, in spite of these blocks.

PAVING THE WAY FOR SELF-MOTIVATION

Many people will agree that one of the things that blocks self-motivation and productivity is fear. Once the fear is minimized or defeated, then self-motivation becomes possible. Naturally, people already have within themselves at least potentially, the drive and objectives which comprise self-motivation. A good example of this is the desire for self fulfillment, personal achievement, association with other people for social approval, money, status, prestige, or security. How can teachers pave the way for their students to develop self-motivation? In other words, how can fears be overcome in order to make self-motivation a reality in students. Teachers who are conscientious and who really care about their students' development of self-motivation could answer the two questions raised above by incorporating some or all of the suggestions listed below, in their dealings with students:

1. Win trust and establish rapport with their students by showing understanding, consideration and respect for their dignity.
2. Consider that negative behavior is in reality a reaction to fear and try to help students overcome their fear by showing compassion.
3. Try to determine the cause for the fear(s).
4. Mitigate the fear by helping the students to control their fear and not to over-react to it. Be empathic and supportive. Say to the student(s): "I'm one hundred percent behind you. I know you can do it because I have confidence in you. Even if you make mistakes, remember that mistakes are opportunities to learn. And who hasn't made mistakes? It all depends on attitude and reaction. Listen, I know you have got what it takes."

5. Treat the students as individuals, not as machines or objects.
6. Treat students on the basis of collegiality, rather than on an expert - neophite basis.
7. Prepare students beforehand for major changes, since unexpected changes can breed fear and insecurity.
8. Do whatever it takes to make students' learning experiences as enjoyable as possible.
9. Try to instill pride in doing a job well.
10. Always praise students' efforts.

The above list of suggestions is not exhaustive by any stretch of imagination, and it is only intended to serve as a starting point for teachers who care about their students' success.

SOME INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS TO INCREASE MOTIVATION IN STUDENTS

Let us now turn to the matter of how teachers can use certain useful instructional techniques to help their students to develop self-motivation. Teachers who are serious about trying to help their students to develop self-motivation have a wide variety of instructional techniques they can include in their teaching activities. Because of the wide variety of these techniques, only those that have been tried and have proved useful in trying to encourage self-motivation in students will be presented and briefly discussed here.

Use of Questioning Skills. There are four different types of questioning skills teachers can employ in the classroom. A teacher may ask: (1) General questions, (2) Divergent questions, (3) Probing questions, and (4) Higher order questions.

General questions are those that are factual in nature, and are intended to help students recall pieces of information. In the hierarchy of types of questions that can be asked, general questions are the lowest and simplest in terms of sophistication and degree of difficulty. These questions may be asked in such a way that they will establish a general pattern or structure

which is intended to serve a purpose. Because these types of questions can help the teacher to advance the lesson in such a way that he or she will not have to depend upon the lecture method, they seem to work well, especially with students who are easily bored and are the least motivated.

Divergent questions are what are traditionally called open-ended questions. These questions, which do not necessarily yield correct or wrong answers, are usually used to encourage students to express their own ideas or opinions about certain issues. Divergent questions allow as well as encourage students to be imaginative and creative in their thinking. The teacher might pose a hypothetical or novel idea and then ask student input in how to deal with the situation. For example, the teacher might create this situation: Imagine that you were marooned on an island. What would you do to survive? Students might then be asked to express their opinions concerning their strategies for survival. Since there are no right or wrong answers to divergent question, this means that even students who are by and large least motivated would at least have an opportunity to participate and to express their own ideas. The teacher might even allow students' answers to diverge in order to establish new areas of consideration.

Unlike the two types of questioning skills already discussed, the skill of probing questions involves the teacher's utilization of students' responses in framing other questions. In using probing questions the teacher is always aiming at encouraging students to go beyond the superficial information given in the answer. Students are required to justify or clarify, in some detail, their original answers. Since the teacher could use probing questions to get other students to react to the first student's answer, this technique allows the teacher to draw more people into the general discussion.

The last of the four types of questions, called higher order questions, is intended to motivate students to employ thinking skills. Higher order questions give students the opportunity to use ideas rather than just remember them. This is a high level of thinking in which activities are based on reflection and inductive-deductive reasoning skills. The teacher might ask questions that would encourage students to solve problems, compare and contrast situations, interpret data, infer or determine relationships between or among things or ideas. Examples of higher order questions are:

Solution - How would you deal with the present unemployment situation in this country?

Comparison and contrast -How would you compare or contrast the Mid-East political conflict with the American civil war?

Interpretation - How do you interpret or evaluate the current status of the arms race between the United States and Russia?

Relationship - What is the relationship between education and social class in the United States?

Inference - What kind of life-style change can we expect from a person who increases his or her education?

Stimulus Variation. This skill is designed to help students from getting bored or becoming apathetic. The teacher varies both his or her verbal and non-verbal behaviors in order to keep students alert and attentive. The skill is also oriented toward the fullest student involvement in both the cognitive and affective domains, thus, it is a very comprehensive skill. Use of gestures, body movements and deliberate pauses are effective means that the teacher can employ to vary the stimuli. The teacher's changing patterns of interaction can be an effective variation. For instance, the teacher might focus attention on one or two students for a short time to pursue a point, or he or she might allow two or more students to pursue an exchange of ideas without interruption. To hold students'

attention, the teacher might vary the students' sensory channels by using the blackboard, diagrams, films, slides, video tapes, artifacts, and other forms of audio-visual materials. Use of questions or reinforcement are good ways of varying stimuli. Student involvement, or motivation could be maximized by the teacher's use of controversial issues or examples.

Reinforcement. Webster's dictionary defines reinforcement as "an act of strengthening the likelihood of a response in a given situation, by a reward." The skill of reinforcement is therefore intended to help the teacher to reward students for their proper behavior. The skill focuses on the teacher's use of positive reinforcement to increase student participation and involvement in the classroom discussions or other activities. If students, especially those who are not easily motivated, are rewarded, the likelihood is that they will develop self-motivation.

CONCLUSION

It is not only important, but also necessary, for classroom teachers to create a happy atmosphere in which students can be given opportunities to develop self-motivation within themselves. This is important because if whatever they are doing adds to their happiness, then their work in itself becomes the ultimate motivator. For classroom teachers, this implies a continuing effort to accentuate the importance of what their students are doing in the overall context of the school and the society. "It is noteworthy in this regard that the most fiendish punishments the military mind can devise entail having a prisoner do something entirely useless like scrubbing his cell floor with his toothbrush, or painting a pile of rocks." (Royal Bank of Canada letter, 1980)

Motivation is a matter of human understanding--of the teacher understanding the student. If and when this level is achieved, it then becomes a matter of the teacher encouraging the students to go as far as they possibly can toward meeting their aspirations--in simple language, their hopes and dreams. This

activity involves allowing students the opportunity to show the teacher what they can do. If this happens, then the students' efforts should be rewarded as much as possible. Students must be made to feel wanted by letting them know how their efforts contribute to the whole school, and even to society at large. More than anyone else in the school community, the classroom teachers play a very important role in helping students to develop their self-motivation. Without their guidance, students would find it difficult, if not impossible, to develop this extremely important skill. It is teachers such as these who make a difference, one way or another, in students' lives. In talking about motivation, one cannot help but appreciate the old proverbial saying, "You can take a horse to the river, but you cannot make him drink!"

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